wheat of Fair Average Quality (FAQ) norms offered for sale at the designated procurement centres are bought by the public procuring agencies at the Minimum Support Price (MSP). Rice is also collected under statutory levy from rice millers/dealers.

(b) and (c) As on 1-4-2003 the stock position of wheat and rice in the Central Pool was 156.45 lakh tonnes and 171.57 lakh tonnes respectively which is well above the minimum buffer norms. Due to drought conditions, there has been an increase in the offtake of foodgrains under the Special Component of Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) which has contributed to reduction of the excess stocks in the Central Pool. However, adequate quantities of rice and wheat have been procured by the Government to both maintain the prescribed buffer stocking norms as well as to meet the entire demand under TPDS and other Welfare Schemes.

Quota of ration for poor

5007. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has raised the monthly quota of ration for the 'poorest of the poor' under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana to 35 kg. per family; and

(b) if so, the justification therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir. The quota of ration for the families under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) has been increased to 35 kg. per family per month with effect from 1.4.2002 to enhance the food security of the poorest of the poor in the country.

MSP of Crops

5008. SHRI SURENDRA LATH : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the farmers in several States and particularly in Orissa are not getting Minimum Support Price for the crops they produce;

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to ensure payment of MSP to the farmers in the State; and

(c) the steps taken to streamline the procurement process?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA) : (a) No reports of distress sale of foodgrains, conforming to Fair Average Quality (FAQ) specifications, have been received by this Department from Orissa or other States during the current Kharif Marketing Season 2002-03 and Rabi Marketing Season 2003-04.

(b) and (c) The FCI has opened 20 paddy purchase centres in 6 Revenue Districts of Orissa during the current Kharif Marketing Season 2002-03 to extend the benefit of Minimum Support Prices to farmers. The centres have been opened in consultation with the State Government and keeping in view locations from where reports of distress sale were received in the past. The FCI has given adequate publicity through the press release in local Oriya Newspapers and also through distribution of leaflets in the local language to educate the farmers about the arrangements made for the procurement of paddy under the MSP operations.

Instructions have been issued to the FCI to ensure that necessary proof / documents are obtained from the millers at the time of procurement of levy rice to ensure that the benefit of MSP has been passed on to the farmers.

Accumulation of levy sugar

5009. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA :

DR. AKHILESH DAS :

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether levy sugar has not been lifted and hence accumulated with the sugar mills;

(b) if so, the unlifted sugar stocks with the mills as on the 1st March, 2003;

(c) whether this has come in the way of the mills clearing the sugarcane growers dues;

(d) whether the mills have sought permission to sell out these stocks in the open market, even at prices below the levy sugar rates; and

(e) whether a lot of this sugar has already been sold in the open market causing depression in open market; and

(f) if so, what is Government's information in this regard?